

MINUTES
of
A Meeting of New Romney Town Council
Held in the Assembly Rooms, New Romney
on Monday 14th April 2025
Commencing at 6.45pm

PRESENT: The Right Worshipful the Mayor of New Romney,
 Councillor John Rivers

Town Ward:
Councillors: J Davies and P Carey,

Coast Ward:
Councillors: P Thomas, J Hiscock, P Coe, K Terry, S O'Hare,
 A Meredith and P Peacock

In Attendance:

Town Clerk	-	Mrs C Newcombe
KCC Councillor	-	Cllr A Hills
Members of the Public	-	1

IN THE CHAIR
 The Mayor – Councillor J Rivers

The formal business of the meeting commenced **@6.45PM.**

647/2024-25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and noted, as follows:

Councillor Rev Cn McLachlan	-	for personal reasons
Councillor L Phillips	-	for personal reasons

648/2024-25 DISPENSATION TO PARTICIPATE

No new applications for Dispensation to Participate had been processed by the Town Clerk.

649/2024-25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

@6.46PM Councillors Hiscock and Thomas declared a Personal Interest in respect of Town Council finance reports due to their employment of a contractor who is also employed by the Town Council. (Minute Ref 661/2024-25 refers)

650/2024-25 REPORT OF THE KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR

The KCC Councillor report was not available on this occasion. Individual Councillor Reports are to be published following the forthcoming KCC elections as the Council is now in a period of Purdah.

651/2024-25 **REPORTS OF THE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

FHDC Councillor reports were not available on this occasion. Individual Councillor Reports are to be published following the forthcoming KCC elections as the Council is now in a period of Purdah.

652/2024-25 **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

It was not necessary to adjourn the meeting as no public questions or statements had been received in writing.

653/2024-25 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

654/2024-25 **RE-CONVENING OF MEETING**

Not applicable.

655/2024-25 **MINUTES**

(i) The Chairman presented the minutes of the **Full Council Meeting** held on **10th March 2025**, copies of which had been previously circulated to all Councillors, and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Carey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 10th March 2025 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

Councillor Meredith abstained from voting as he had not been present at the afore-mentioned meeting.

The Chairman subsequently signed the afore-mentioned minutes.

(ii) The minutes of the **Especial Full Council meeting held on Monday 7th April 2025** were not yet available and it was reported that they would now be presented at the next ordinary meeting of Full Council.

656/2024-25 **MAYOR'S REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Mayor's report regarding civic engagements attended since the last meeting was duly received and noted.

657/2024-25 **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk's report was received and noted and read as under:

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL – 14TH APRIL 2025
TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Actions completed since the Full Council meeting held on 10th March 2025

1) All preparations for the forthcoming **VE Day Celebrations** are currently in hand, noting the approved budget for this event.

2) All preparations for the **official opening week of the new Maude Community Centre** are currently in hand, noting the approved budget for this event. It should be noted that it has been necessary to push back the opening week events due to project delays incurred as a direct result of the Emergency Gas Repairs on the A259 at the junction with Station Road. The official opening week will now run from Friday 18th July to Friday 25th July – with the Official Opening Ceremony and Reception now to be held on the evening of Friday 18th July; Councillors will receive further details in due course as soon as everything has been finalised.

Additional Items of report

1) Guidelines and restrictions on decision making and publicity during the pre-election period

Local (KCC) elections are due to take place on 1st May 2025 so it would be useful to remind Councillors about the guidelines and restrictions on publicity during the pre-election period that starts when the notice of election is published. This period is traditionally known as ‘**Purdah**’ – but is now more commonly referred to as a ‘period of heightened sensitivity’ – and these restrictions apply to all four-yearly local elections (and, indeed, to national elections).

From the start of the pre-election period, the Council must comply with restrictions outlined in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 as amended in 1988. In addition, a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity published in 2011 makes clear that particular care should be taken in periods of heightened sensitivity, such as in the run up to an election. The Act defines publicity as “**any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public.**”

Generally, the Act says that the Council should “**not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.**” The Code of Practice recommends that authorities should generally not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters and that publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute. Authorities are allowed to publish factual information which identifies the names, constituencies and parties of candidates at elections and can publish factual information to counteract misleading, controversial or extreme (for example, racist/sexist) information.

Decision making

In relation to decision making within the Council, the position remains that it is **'business as usual'** unless there are very good reasons why this should not be the case. In the vast majority of cases, the pre-election period will have no impact on normal council business, including the approval of planning decisions or other decisions – including financial decisions - relating to larger projects that have already been on-going, undertaking budget consultations or completing budget-setting processes – even if such decisions might be deemed by some to be controversial. The Council should, however, avoid making decisions relating to any potential new large-scale projects during Purdah and should not launch any new consultations - unless it is a statutory duty or considered normal council business, such as budget consultations.

What this means

- The primary restriction is on proactive publicity by the Council which particularly relates to candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election.
- The Council can still issue media releases on factual matters provided that these do not identify individual Councillors or groups of Councillors and the Council should not include photographs of individual Councillors in any media release during Purdah.
- Councillors are still free to respond to enquiries received from the media in a personal capacity, provided that they make it clear, as usual, that they are not representing the view of the Council as a corporate body.
- Individual councillors can issue their own statements, write letters to the local newspaper(s) for publication, or contact the media directly in a personal capacity as part of their election campaign, but must not use Council resources to do so.
- Council Officers cannot, therefore, assist any Councillor with producing or distributing any pre-election public statements or campaign materials or with contacting the media or other third parties regarding the election.
- A Councillor should not try to book a New Romney Town Council building to hold a campaign meeting or other political meeting during Purdah as it would require an Officer to assist by taking a booking and using Officer time in undertaking the associated administration – which is, in effect, using Council resources.

It is still possible for the Council to issue statements on behalf of a Councillor holding a key political or civic position provided it relates to important events which are outside the Council's control and can be shown to justify a Member response. These occasions are likely to be rare and to be the exception, rather than the rule.

658/2024-25 **CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT**

(i) The Maude Community Centre Project Update Report was duly received and noted.

(ii) The Maude Community Centre Project Financial Update Report was not available on this occasion.

659/2024-25 **STANDING ORDER NO.14**

No questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order 14.

660/2024-25 **STANDING COMMITTEES**

(i)(a) Councillor Terry presented the minutes of the **Planning & Environment Committee** meeting held on **12th March 2025**, which were duly received and noted.

(b) The minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting held on Wednesday 2nd April were not yet available. It was reported that they will now be presented at the next ordinary meeting of Full Council.

(ii) Councillor Thomas presented the minutes of the **Personnel Committee** meeting held on **25th March 2025**, which were duly received and noted.

(ii) Councillor Thomas presented the minutes of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** meeting held on **19th March 2025**, which were duly received and noted.

661/2024-25 **RFO'S FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR 2024-25**

The Clerk presented final payments and receipts and final bank reconciliation for the month of **February 2025**, which were duly received and noted and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Terry
SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the finance reports for the month of February 2025 be hereby received and approved.

Payments and receipts for the month of **February 2025** being in the amounts as detailed below:

February 2025	Receipts:	Payments:
NatWest Current Account	£2,050.70	£2,050.70
Unity Trust Current Account:	£0.00	£713.47
Lloyds Bank Business Account:	£201,046.28	£251,792.28

NatWest Business Reserve Account:	£1,283.58	£831.70
Petty Cash:	£0.00	£30.80
Lloyds Bank Corporate Card:	£509.98	£1,073.82
Lloyds Bank Instant Access Online Saver	£2,871.61	£200,000.00
NSIB	£0.00	£0.00

662/2024-25 **COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORTS**

The notes of a meeting of the Romney Marsh Forum were duly received and noted.

663/2024-25 **REVIEW OF APPENDICES TO STANDING ORDERS**

Having duly reviewed Policy Documents appended to Standing Orders as presented and as previously circulated to all Councillors and having also reviewed a number of separately specified Policy Documents as presented and as previously circulated to all Councillors , it was:

(i)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Hiscock

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peacock

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that all amendments to specified Policy Documents appended to Standing Orders, be hereby approved, as presented.

The following Town Council Policy Documents were, therefore, formally amended:

- 1) Addendum 1a to Appendix 1 (xvi) Data Audit
- 2) Addendum to Appendix 2 (iv) Schedule of Land and Property Assets
- 3) Addendum to Appendix 6 (vi) Pride of New Romney Awards Scheme
- 4) Appendix 1 (ii)(a) Terms of Reference F&GP Committee
- 5) Appendix 1 (ii)(d) Terms of Reference Personnel Committee
- 6) Appendix 1 (iii)(a) Community Hall Steering Group Terms of Reference
- 7) Appendix 1 (v) Co-option Policy
- 8) Appendix 1 (vi)(a)(b) Councillor and Officer Authorities

- 9) Appendix 1 (vii) Policy on Recording and Publishing Delegated Decisions
- 10) Appendix 2 (ii)(e) Health and Safety Policy
- 11) Appendix 2 (iv) Schedule of Land and Property Assets
- 12) Appendix 2 (viii) Grant Funding Policy
- 13) Appendix 2 (xiii) Corporate Debt Recovery Policy
- 14) Appendix 4 (ii)(b) Information Available Under the Model Publication Scheme
- 15) Appendix 4 (iii)(b) Equality Objectives
- 16) Addendum to Appendix 5(ix) to Flexible Working Policy
- 17) Appendix 5 (v) Equal Pay Policy and Approved Salary Scales
- 18) Appendix 6 (i) Civic Attendance Schedule
- 19) Appendix 6 (iv) Civic Protocol

(ii)(a) Having duly considered the Schedule of Payments Approved in Advance for financial year 2025-26 as circulated to all Councillors and as presented, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that Appendix 2(iii) Schedule of Payments Approved in Advance for financial year 2025-26, be hereby approved, as presented.

(b) Having duly considered the Annual Investment Strategy for 2025-26 as circulated to all Councillors and presented, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that Appendix 2(vi) Annual Investment Strategy for 2025-26 be hereby approved, as presented.

(c) Having duly reviewed the Risk Management Statement for 2024-25 as circulated to all Councillors and as presented, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peacock

SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that Appendix 2(ii)(a) Risk Management Statement in respect of 2024-25 be hereby approved, as presented.

(d) Having duly considered the Statement of Intent for 2025-26 as circulated to all Councillors and as presented, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Terry
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hiscock

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that Appendix 2(ii)(b) Statement of Intent for 2025-26 be hereby approved, as presented.

(iii) Having duly considered the withdrawal of four procedural documents that are no longer required, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas
SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the following New Romney Town Council procedural documents shall hereby be formally withdrawn with immediate effect:

- **Addendum to Appendix 3(xv) Supplementary Agreement re use of Maude Pavilion and Sports Field**
- **Appendix 1(iii)(b) Community Hall & Sports Pavilion Stakeholder Consultation Group Terms of Reference**
- **Appendix 3(xv) Maude Pavilion User Group 364 Day Agreement**
- **Appendix 3(xvi) Community Hall 364 Day Agreement**

664/2024-25 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

@7.10PM, having duly considered the nature of matters to be discussed, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that due to the sensitive personal information about to be considered, which may serve to identify one or more individuals, it is advisable in the public interest that the Public and Press be temporarily excluded and they are now instructed to withdraw.

KCC Councillor Hills and one remaining member of public left the meeting at that time.

665/2024-25 **ON-GOING MATTERS**

It was confirmed that there were no matters of report on this occasion.

@7.11PM the Clerk left the meeting; the Chairman confirmed that he was to record any decisions of the Council.

666/2024-25 **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

Having duly considered the matter of publicly published misinformation and subsequent related communications, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Meredith

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that

- (i) The Looker be formally requested by New Romney Town Council to issue, within 21 days, a full retraction and public apology in The Looker and directly to:
- The staff of New Romney Town Council, and
 - The staff and parents associated with Baby Seashells Nursery
- for the distress and potential reputational damage caused by the original article, related communications and subsequent published statement.

- (ii) New Romney Town Council confirms that [the identified party] is in contravention of the Vexatious Communications Policy and, as a result, shall be barred from direct communication with the Town Clerk for a period of three months*.

* (to 14th July 2025).

- (iii) The Deputy Town Clerk be instructed to contact the Council's solicitor without delay to:
- Ascertain the Council's legal position in response to The Looker's original article and its follow-up response, and
 - Seek advice on the appropriate next course of action, including any reputational, procedural or legal remedies available to the Council
- This to be funded from the Admin & Miscellaneous budget.

667/2024-25 **LAND AND TENANCY MATTERS**

It was confirmed that there were no matters of report on this occasion.

668/2024-25 **CONCLUSION OF PRIVATE SESSION**

@8.30PM it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peacock

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the confidential session be hereby concluded.

The Clerk was invited to return to the meeting chamber.

The Chairman thanked the Councillors and Clerk for their attendance and the meeting concluded **@ 8.30PM.**

NB: All documents referred to herein are available at the Town Hall for perusal on request, except for those documents of a sensitive / legal nature discussed in private session, including documents relating to staff matters which remain Private and Confidential in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Minutes prepared by the Town Clerk